

COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM  
FY 2000 ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT

RECOVERY PROGRAM  
PROJECT NUMBER: CAP-14, PIP-5a

I. Project Title: Coordinated Reservoir Operations

II. Principal Investigators:

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III. Project Summary:

Project involves voluntary operational coordination of selected reservoirs in the Colorado River Basin upstream from the confluence of the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers. The goal is to enhance spring peak flows to improve endangered fish species habitat in the 15 Mile Reach of the Colorado without diminishing reservoir yields or affecting the timing of reservoir filling. Participating reservoirs in the past have included Green Mountain and Ruedi (Reclamation), Wolford Mountain (Colorado River Water Conservation District), Dillon and Williams Fork (Denver Water), and Willow Creek and Granby (Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District & Reclamation). FY 2000 was the fourth year of attempting to enhance spring peak flows in the 15 Mile Reach. Due to significantly lower than average runoff this year, participating reservoirs were not able to make coordinated releases to enhance peak flows. The project continues to seek improvement of the coordination process, public involvement, and participation of additional reservoirs.

IV. Study Schedule: Ongoing and on track.

V. Relationship to RIPRAP: I. A.3.c.(3)(c)

VI. Accomplishment of FY 2000 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

Water Year 2000 was a challenging year for Coordinated Reservoir Operations. In the early spring of the year snowpack in most watersheds above participating reservoirs was below average. By April 1 snowpack had increased to normal to slightly above normal. In early April Participating reservoir owner/operators decided to attempt coordinated reservoir operations. Owner/operators went ahead with preparing traditional and peak enhancement scenarios for their reservoirs based upon early April forecasts. On April 10<sup>th</sup> a press release was made to inform interested publics that the reservoirs would be

attempting coordinated operations and that more details would be provided as the runoff season progressed. A second news release was issued on April 26 announcing a public meeting for May 15<sup>th</sup> to discuss Coordinated Reservoir Operations and Ruedi reservoir operations for the year. A second notice of the public meeting was issued through the press on May 11<sup>th</sup>.

By late April snowpack had begun to drop well below average. By May 1 snowpack measurements indicated 60 to 90 percent of average above participating reservoirs. Conference calls were held on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> to assess and discuss the ability of the reservoirs to release inflow to enhance the peak flow in the 15 Mile Reach. Reservoir owner/operators were becoming increasingly concerned about filling their reservoirs even without peak enhancement given the developing conditions. Long range predictions at the time also indicated that there might be a dry summer and concern was expressed that water not stored on during the peak runoff would not be available for later summer augmentation and that augmentation of late summer flows was more critical to the endangered fish. During the May 15<sup>th</sup> conference call it was decided by the participants that reservoirs would not be able to contribute and that the effort would be cancelled for this year. The decision not to conduct Coordinated Reservoir Operations was also presented at the public meeting on the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup>.

An initial peak of approximately 8500 cfs in the 15 Mile Reach occurred on May 8<sup>th</sup> followed by a steep decline in flows in the Colorado. The second and final peak of approximately 13,500 cfs occurred on May 31<sup>st</sup> and within 4 days flows had dropped below 10,000 cfs. Before and during the peak flow period in the 15 Mile Reach a couple of the participating reservoirs did spill or release. Wolford reservoir spilled twice, the first time for a few days around May 13<sup>th</sup> and the second a few days around the 27<sup>th</sup>. Granby also made large releases for a few days around May 31<sup>st</sup>. These releases probably contributed to the flows at Cameo but were in response to reservoir filling schedules and were not credited toward Coordinated Reservoir Operations.

As actual release coordination was not worked through this year as there were no specific issues identified in WY 2000. The State of Colorado is continuing to work on the Colorado River Decision Support System, which will be relied upon in the future to conduct the accounting for CRO.

## VII. Recommendations:

The Recovery Program should continue to support the efforts of and encourage participation in Coordinated Reservoir Operations. The participating entities should work with the NWS Colorado River Basin Forecast Center to improve peak runoff forecasts. The ongoing effort should continue to refine and improve the coordination process and address issues including identification of inundation levels downstream of participating reservoirs, improved communication & coordination, improved accounting and monitoring.

## VIII. Project Status: The Coordinated Reservoir Operations is an ongoing activity and will

continue to refine and improve the process and address issues identified to allow for greater effectiveness of the effort.

IX. FY 2000 Budget Status:

- A. Funds Provided: TBA
- B. Funds Expended: TBA
- C. Difference:
- D. Percent of the FY 2000 work completed, and projected costs to complete: 100% complete.
- E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: \$0

X. Status of Data Submission: Not applicable

XI. Signed: M. Wilson Date 12/5/00  
Principal Investigator